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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 001064

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SUBJECT: UNHCR GUTERRES IN ISLAMABAD

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During separate May 15 briefings for Ambassador and the donor community, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres said he was satisfied the GOP now understood the severity and complexity of the IDP challenge and believed the UN response was proceeding better than expected. Government response capacity was low, however, and the resource needs were enormous. It was critical to help the GOP cope for both humanitarian and political geo-strategic reasons; if the GOP did not get this right, it would have a destabilizing effect with global impact and implications. The next challenge is preparing for return and rehabilitation, but we must also plan for a protracted displacement.

¶2. (U) UNHCR and the GOP on May 15 signed an agreement formalizing the GOP's extension of Afghan refugee status until 2012 and initiating the Refugee Affected and Hosting Area (RAHA) initiative. Guterres suggested that RAHA, which will provide development assistance to both Afghan refugees and their Pakistani hosts, could be adapted or extended to IDP affected and hosting areas. The UN will informally present to donors a consolidated appeal on May 18; UNHCR estimates that its component of the appeal will be USD 80 million. This USD 80 million represents the unfunded portion of the USD 105 million necessary only for UNHCR-implemented programs to support 250,000 families through the end of 2009. He estimated the IDP population would grow to two million; further displacement would depend on Pakistani military operations and strategy. Guterres worried that there was insufficient global support to fund both emergency and rehabilitation needs; he plans a media campaign to raise awareness and elicit additional support. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (C) In a May 15 meeting with Ambassador, Guterres first commemorated the successful hostage release of UNHCR representative John Solecki. Guterres said he came to Pakistan for three reasons: (1) to express solidarity with the GOP, a partner that has been hosting millions of Afghan refugees for more than 30 years; (2) to convince the GOP to end its denial and confusion about the need to help internally displaced persons (IDPs), a goal that is now moot because the GOP is serious and aware of the complexities of the IDP challenge; and (3) to raise global awareness about the scope and nature of the Pakistan IDP problem. Guterres visited IDPs in Swabi on May 14 and planned May 16 to visit Peshawar.

¶4. (C) Guterres said that while his job was humanitarian aid,

but he realized that there were overarching political, geo-strategic reasons to help the GOP respond to its IDP crisis. The first two weeks displaced people recover and take stock. Thereafter they start measuring the assistance that they are receiving; if it is inadequate, they will become angry and frustrated. If the global community cannot support the GOP in dealing with IDPs, this crisis will have a devastating and destabilizing effect with global impact.

¶ 15. (C) Guterres said that the two big questions are capacity to respond to the crisis and availability of sufficient resources for the immediate response, for medium-term assistance of displaced populations and the local community which supports them, and for mobilizing national capacity to permit return and rehabilitation. Guterres said he was reasonably satisfied the pieces of the assistance puzzle were fitting together, and the response so far was better than he had expected. Having met May 15 with the leaders of the National Assembly and Senate and with the Minister of Finance, Guterres said he was convinced that Pakistan's leaders now recognized the enormity of the task at hand. However, government capacity is limited. The resources committed to date are insufficient to the challenge, and Guterres was not sure that adequate resources would be made available.

¶ 16. (C) Guterres said that the UN would informally present to donors its consolidated Pakistan appeal on May 18. UNHCR estimates that its component of the appeal will be USD 80 million. This USD 80 million represents the unfunded portion of the USD 105 million necessary only for UNHCR-implemented

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programs to support 250,000 families (1.5 million persons) through the end of 2009. To date, UNHCR, which provides camp management, protection and non-food items, has received USD 25 million to support this effort. With the number of IDPs now above 1.5 million, the World Food Program (WFP), also part of the UN appeal, is currently funded only to provide food to the IDPs for the next two months.

¶ 17. (C) The next challenge is to look ahead towards reconstruction in a way that transforms the situation on the ground and eliminates the environment that bred extremism. IDP return and rehabilitation will present an opportunity to rebuild a society to be more moderate, open, and based in rule of law, but doing so will require much more dialogue and planning with the GOP. Working with IOM, UN Habitat, and NGOs like World Vision, UNHCR will assist rehabilitation by providing shelter, sanitation and building materials. Guterres emphasized UNHCR's focus on local procurement whenever possible.

¶ 18. (C) After protracted negotiations, UNHCR and the GOP on May 15 signed an agreement formalizing the GOP's decision to extend the stay of Afghan refugees in Pakistan until 2012 and initiating RAHA, a five-year, USD 140 million project in which UNHCR and its UN partners will fund development projects in 21 refugee affected and refugee hosting districts in Pakistan. Guterres said that RAHA presented an important rebuilding opportunity. He added that this idea of community-based development that benefited both Afghan refugees and the local Pakistani population would be a good model for IDP affected hosting areas as well. He hoped that RAHA could be adapted and expanded to include IDP hosting and affected areas but said he had made the decision to sign the agreement as it was currently agreed rather than risk another long delay to re-negotiate it to include them.

¶ 19. (C) Ambassador noted that the GOP's civilian capacity was extraordinarily weak. The UN agencies' performance had improved, but its response to the Bajaur IDP situation had been uncharacteristically poor. She urged that OCHA send a permanent high-level representative to Pakistan to support the excellent work being done by Manuel Bressler, who also needs staff assistance. She also believed that Jean Arnault

could assist with donor coordination, an issue of growing importance as we begin rehabilitation work and implement projects from the Donors' Conference. Guterres said he had tried and failed to have the UN appoint for Pakistan a senior-level humanitarian coordinator in a position separate from that of the UN Resident Representative. The compromise solution was Rashid Khalikov, Director of OCHA's New York Office, who did need to spend more time in Pakistan. He will arrive in Islamabad on May 16 for a two-week stay. In the meantime, UNHCR and the World Food Program were working well together on the ground.

¶10. (C) Asked about UNHCR's willingness to work with the Pakistani military, Guterres said that UNHCR could not work in "militarized" camps, (i.e. ones in which camp administration was military). Currently, with only 10-15 percent of IDPs in camps, UNHCR had camp management under control and did not see a role for the Army. Police, not the Army, should provide camp security. Guterres praised the Army, however, for that day actively supporting civilian evacuation from Swat with vehicles and logistical support. He also was quick to say that UNHCR "was the first to be relieved" at the appointment of Lt. General Nadeem to lead the Government's relief effort. He said that UNHCR would work cooperatively for the good of the IDPs and common sense would prevail. It was important to realize the difference between a national disaster and a conflict environment in determining appropriate relief responsibilities. Ambassador noted there were no police available in the region, so the Army would have to provide security.

¶11. (C) Looking ahead, Guterres said over 100,000 IDPs were registered on May 15 alone. Whether the population grew further and when IDPs could return home would depend on military operations and strategy. Asked about Lt. General Nadeem's optimistic prediction of imminent large-scale return home by IDPs, Guterres said that some people would want to go

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back initially, but it will be important not to rush people back. We need to plan for a return scenario, he said, but also to plan a community development approach to permit IDP integration during a relatively protracted displacement. We cannot fail to plan for the possibility of growing and ongoing displacement, he said. It is simple to organize transportation and a return package, but more complex to ensure that conditions are such that IDPs can settle back home and not have to leave again. The Ambassador agreed, noting that the Pakistani military had plans to move into the Waziristans, but we doubted the military could meet its proposed timetable for beginning this operation in the next few weeks.

PATTERSON